

Cross border external QA:

Reflections on the meeting

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What is the vision?

- Building the EHEA
- Market.. (but what kind of market?)



Positive view of EQA

- Disturb “monopoly” of national agencies;
- respect & respond to institutional autonomy;
- enable relevant, good practice international QA to thrive and develop;
- promote intercultural values
- Focus on enhancement.....

Negative view

- Lose public responsibility;
- lack necessary local specific knowledge and understanding;
- Import inappropriate, judgemental external expertise
- waste money;
- lose trust;

Where do we stand now?

- Survey shows that things are moving and agencies are active: networks, projects, evaluations in neighbouring countries; TNE etc
- 2012 Bologna implementation report: 11 EHEA countries where HEIs can choose to be evaluated by non national agency. Number seems set to rise for 2015 report

But...

- Overviews sometimes misrepresent aspects of reality;
- 50% of agencies didn't respond...
- Examples here show that developments have been between countries with cultural / linguistic affinity and mainly confined to EU: FR / BE(Fr); CH/DE/AU; UK TNE
- Is this really what we understand by a European quality assurance space, taking advantage of diversity?

Motivation for EQA?

- Agencies: impetus to develop; to learn and improve their practice; to be among the pioneers; to avoid getting bored (doing the same things in the same way)...
- Institutions: competitive advantage; international reputation; prestige.
- Is there a danger that quality enhancement becomes confused with self promotion?

Attitudes: government

- *Ok for our agencies to work abroad, but not quite sure about other agencies working here..*
- What is behind this?
- **Public responsibility** & concern that social dimension will be overlooked
- **Arrogance**: “we are the best” and nothing to be learned from EQA?
- **Fear** of being found out that we might not be the best?

Attitudes: agencies

- Divides into those who are doing it & those who would like to do it..
- Are we sure?
- Maybe also those who would not like to do it, and those who would rather others didn't do it either
- Agencies who respond to survey may have very different attitudes to those who don't – and we need to engage with those who don't respond as well...

Attitudes: HEIs

- We don't really know, (yet) and need to find out
- Experience of programmes such as IEP show that HEIs are positive and engaged when they see interest...
- Also likely to have concerns about cost, logistics, legal implications etc

How to do EQA?

- Should agencies change behaviour abroad?
- Different views: Keep the same standards, procedures and approaches vs
- Adapt to demands/requirements of HEIs
- Issues with language/logistics/intercultural attitudes/knowledge of other systems need thought
- ESG crucial...

Some concerns

1 Conflation of cross border QA with recognition and mobility:

- *“Cooperation involving French agency means that French state can now accept Belgian engineers”*
- Joint programmes/degrees: recognition problems if QA issues not solved (and they haven't been)
- **Paradox: cooperation may create a danger of being less open to those with whom we don't cooperate.**

Concerns

- 2 “It’s more important for small countries”
- small countries need to be international in their approach to QA
 - But so do bigger countries...
 - Danger of thinking that bigger means better, and that big countries dominate the EQA “market”
 - **So how can we create a level playing field?**

Concerns

- 3 becomes a trendy “add on” that gets in the way of addressing quality issues...
- Ljubljana: do you need foreign agency programme/faculty/system evaluation to prepare for national accreditation?

Key challenge

- How to move on from “if it’s important (legal implications) must be a national agency responsibility” ?
- Good to hear of examples (BE/FR) where programmes ***failed*** accreditation... EQA shouldn’t be perceived as an easy option

So should we carry on?

- Is there an alternative? Is the world going to become less international?
- EQA not everything: internationalisation at home
- Government commitments have been made, and we should embrace opportunity
- However, can address this agenda thoughtfully and cooperatively, or less intelligently focusing on self interest

What might help?

1 Need to share experience, learn from mistakes

=> Think how best to do this (govts/agencies/HEIs)

What might help?

2 Market model needs to be considered.

Selection by HEIs from EQAR list may not be the best way...

- Guidance and advice to match HEIs with agencies. Brokering role for E4?

What might help?

3 Resource allocation.. May need European funding to support some agencies to internationalise

4 Sharing of experts: common database (project for ENQA/EQAR?)



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